

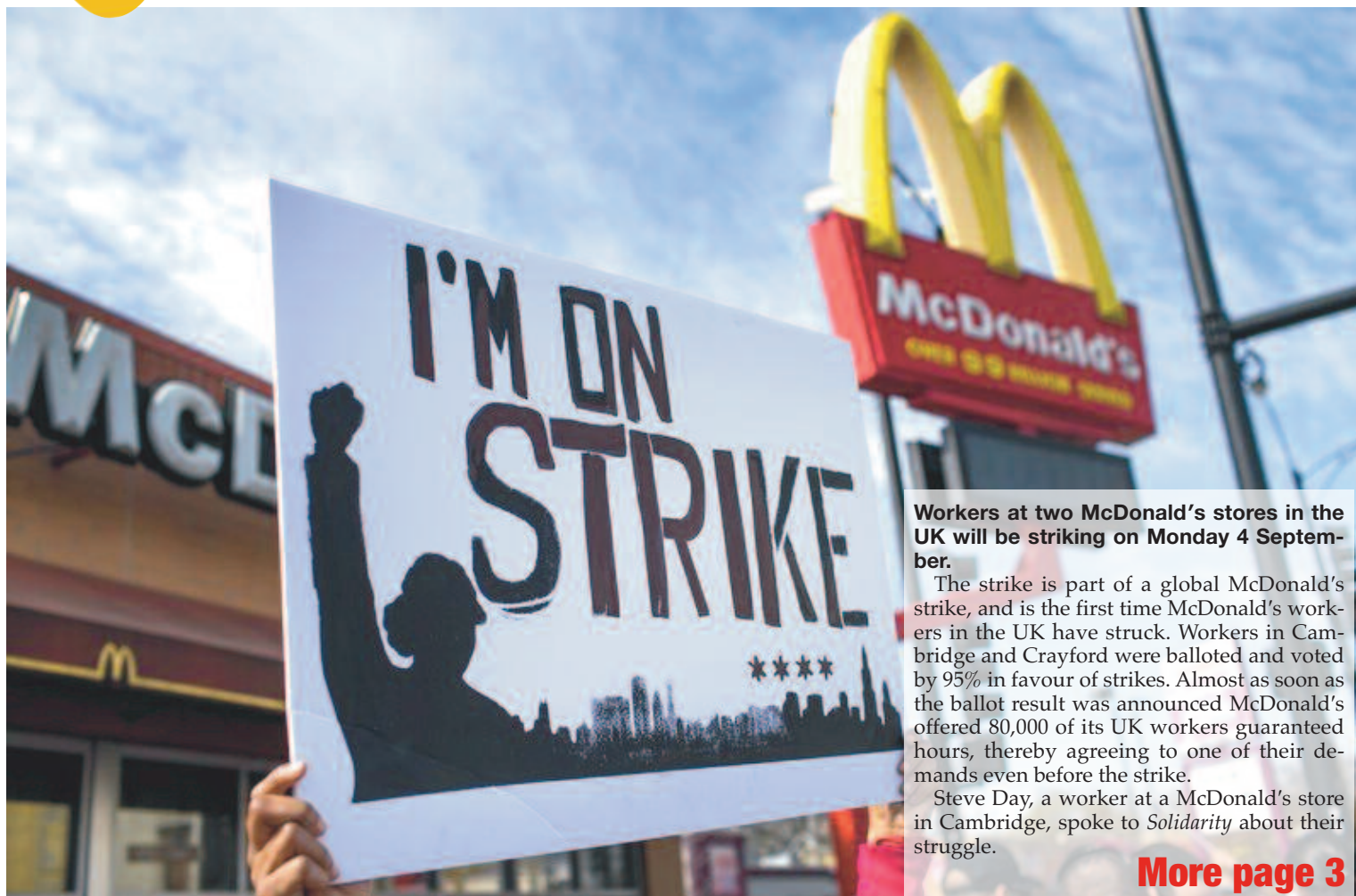


# & Workers' Liberty **Solidarity**

For social ownership of the banks and industry

No 446 23 August 2017 50p/£1

# BACK THE WORKERS



Workers at two McDonald's stores in the UK will be striking on Monday 4 September.

The strike is part of a global McDonald's strike, and is the first time McDonald's workers in the UK have struck. Workers in Cambridge and Crayford were balloted and voted by 95% in favour of strikes. Almost as soon as the ballot result was announced McDonald's offered 80,000 of its UK workers guaranteed hours, thereby agreeing to one of their demands even before the strike.

Steve Day, a worker at a McDonald's store in Cambridge, spoke to *Solidarity* about their struggle.

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## McDonald's workers to strike on 4 September

### Inside:

**Pull-out: Against left-wing antisemitism!**



**Attacks in Spain and Finland**



*Solidarity* reports on terrorist attacks in Spain and Finland.

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**Trump: the unpredictable face of neoliberalism**



*Solidarity* interviews Andrew Gamble about the Trump presidency.

**See pages 6-7**

**Join Labour!**

**Labour Campaign for Free Movement set up**

**See page 10**



# For the politics of solidarity against terror

By Simon Nelson

**Socialists should give no political space whatsoever to the “reasons” behind the cowardly attacks in Spain and Finland.**

We condemn these attacks, carried out in the name far-right Islamism and violent jihad. Our sympathies are with those affected.

## SPAIN

**It seems the attack in Las Ramblas Barcelona was part of a planned attack, by 12 men.**

This was exposed when a gas explosion in a building killed two men likely to have been making bombs and storing explosives. The Sagra Familia Cathedral may have been chosen as their next target.



The choice of a popular tourist area shows a similarity with the attacks in Nice, Westminster Bridge, and London Bridge. Eight of the perpetrators are now dead and include Imam Es Satty a supposed key figure in the radicalisation of the young Spanish and Moroccan men involved in the attack. He

spent three months in the town of Vilvoorde in Belgium from which 20 jihadists travelled to Syria in 2014.

Daesh has once again claimed the attack but any direct connection between their leadership and the attackers is, if real, not yet known.

The Spanish government has come into conflict with Catalan officials over whether the cell has been formally dismantled or if there may be other members still planning attacks. The US has told Spain it was unacceptable for the attack to have happened, given US intelligence was made available to them.

The attack will possibly prompt a rethink of policing and intelligence across Europe. It may mean civil liberties will be further cur-

tailed and more harassments of Muslim communities.

The Spanish Popular Party government is intent on more police-state measures. This follows the passing of a National Security Law, a response to the Charlie Hebdo attacks, which allows far wider powers to be used by the government in a time of “emergency.” If Spain raises its terror alert level it can deploy 5,000 soldiers onto the streets. The last time that occurred was under the rule of the fascist Franco dictatorship.

## FINLAND

**The stabbing of six people in Turku is the first terror attack ever recorded in Finland.**

The lone attacker who targeted women was apparently a Moroccan

and, until recently, living in asylum accommodation. Such a revelation will bolster the Finnish far-right and their main political representatives, the True Finns Party who have already used it to stoke up anti-Muslim and anti-refugee rhetoric.

Finland has accepted many more Syrian refugees than the UK, even with its much smaller population. This decision has been a major target for attack by the True Finns.

**In both of these latest attacks, as elsewhere, human solidarity surfaced; people, including a paramedic, put their lives at risk to try and help. Solidarity and the politics of hope and liberation are what we need to fight back against the reaction and barbarity of these attacks.**

# Will Chavismo survive Venezuela's crisis?

By Pablo Velasco

**Venezuela's growing social polarisation and slide towards civil war is the combined result of right-wing destabilisation and the actions of the Maduro government.**

The current political impasse arises from the unravelling of the “Bolivarian” project of Hugo Chávez. His successor Nicolás Maduro narrowly won the presidential election in 2013, but failed to retain the regime's popularity with the majority of Venezuelan people.

Maduro's ruling PSUV party lost the National Assembly elections to the right wing opposition in 2015. Last year, the president suspended the recall referendum demanded by the right-wing opposition under the constitution and then the regional elections. The current crisis was triggered in March, when the pro-Maduro judiciary undermined the National Assembly's legislative powers. The right-wing began weeks of daily demonstrations in Caracas in response.

On 1 May, Maduro announced elections for a Constituent Assembly, formally intended to redraft Chávez's 1999 constitution but in reality to circumvent the existing parliament. These elections took place on 30 July and were boycotted by the opposition, resulted in a heavily pro-Chavista body.

One of the first acts of the Constituent Assembly was to remove former Chavista Attorney General Luisa Ortega from office. Diosdado Cabello, deputy leader of the PSUV has already proposed that the Constituent Assembly should meet for two years. It is clear that Maduro hopes to use the new legislature to stabilise Chavista rule and ride out crisis. However there is nothing in these moves which widen democracy or make more space for the working class to organise itself independently.

The context for this crisis is an economic collapse of enormous proportions.

Whereas Chávez benefited from rising oil prices, swelling government coffers and funding welfare programmes, Maduro's regime has suffered as oil revenues collapsed. According to the IMF, Venezuela's GDP is currently 35% below 2013 levels — a crash on a par with the Great Depression and the collapse of Stalinism. Runaway inflation has decimated living standards and doubled levels of poverty. An academic study found that three-quarters of Venezuelans have lost 9 kilos in weight over the last two years.

In response Maduro has been to draw up plans to exploit Arco Minero, Venezuela's Amazon region. Previously ruled out by Chávez on environmental grounds, Maduro has offered multinational corporations concessions to mine the region. The government also formed Camimpeg, an autonomous company run by the Ministry of Defence to administer the zone. These plans may salvage the regime, but only at the expense of ecological catastrophe.

## POLITICS

**The political context for the current crisis is also the deliberate strategy of the right-wing opposition around the Mesa de la Unidad Democrática (MUD) to destabilise the Maduro government.**

The traditional Venezuelan bourgeoisie, which enjoyed higher living standards off the back of oil rents for decades, never accepted the legitimacy of the Chávez government. It sought by attempted coups and lock outs to overthrow the regime in 2002-03. With the death of Chávez and the incompetence of Maduro, it believes its time has come again. Yet it remains deeply divided, with no authoritative leader and shallow social roots.

The right wing has been strongly



Maduro

backed by successive US administrations, from Bush to Obama. Trump has imposed sanctions on individual Chavista leaders and threatened Venezuela's oil exports. Mercosur [regional trade bloc] has suspended Venezuela, while the Organisation of American States has condemned the Maduro regime. The ambassadors of Britain, France, Spain and Mexico have backed the old National Assembly against the new Constituent Assembly.

There are ominous signs of armed unrest. Over 120 people have been killed since the right-wing destabilisation strategy escalated this year.

The right-wing opposition are not democrats. They do not respect the rule of law nor do they offer more freedom for Venezuelan workers. If they succeed they will impose an authoritarian neoliberal government, hell-bent on privatisation, deregulation and austerity that would throw back workers' living standards.

The first principle of Marxism is to tell the truth to the working class, to state what is. From the beginning Workers' Liberty has criticised the Chavista regime from the perspective of working-class self-

emancipation. We never accepted its rhetoric about “Bolivarian revolution” or “21st century socialism”. Venezuela under Chávez promoted only social welfare capitalism. There has been no revolution, in the sense of the working class overthrowing bourgeois state power and establishing its own rule. We have never accepted the fantasy of Chavista nationalisations constituting “workers' control”, particularly when most of the economy remained in private hands.

## BONAPARTIST

**We have defined the Chávez government as a bourgeois Bonapartist formation, what Marx called “the rule of the praetorians”.**

We pointed to the essential role of the civic-military alliance in Chávez's project, whereby the army is central to the Chavista form of rule.

Today the Venezuelan armed forces control a huge variety of companies in banking, agriculture, transport, communications, technology, construction, mining and other sectors. The military runs many social welfare programmes. It has special shops on military bases, other privileges and access to

foreign currency. This is military state capitalism — venal, corrupt and ultimately reactionary.

Chavismo was never part of the socialist project. What Chávez did was to incorporate wide sections of the Venezuelan left behind his project and to cauterise the militant labour movement that developed in the early years of his rule.

Out of struggles to advance working-class living standards and defeat the right wing opposition, the UNT trade union confederation was formed. However today the largest union centre is the Bolivarian Socialist Central of Workers (CSBT), close to the regime.

On the Venezuelan socialist left, many took the disastrous decision to join the ruling PSUV. Some tendencies such as the United League of Chavista Socialists (LUCHAS) remain within, while previous supporters such as Marea Socialista (Socialist Tide) have now left it.

The real tragedy in the current crisis is the absence of an authentic working-class socialist pole of attraction to organise the millions disillusioned by Chavismo but who also understand the need to defeat the right-wing opposition.

Responsibility for this debacle lies heavily with the international left. The worst offenders have been the International Marxist Tendency (Socialist Appeal in Britain) and *Green Left Weekly* in Australia, who peddled illusions that Chavismo was somehow socialist. Hands Off Venezuela, the Venezuela Solidarity Campaign and similar initiatives have operated as external propagandists for Chavismo and apologists for the Venezuelan government, not with making solidarity with workers and their own organisations.

**International socialists must help the Venezuelan workers to defeat the right-wing coup plotters, so that they can then settle their accounts with the Chavista regime.**



# Support the McDonalds workers!

**Workers at two McDonald's stores in the UK will be striking on Monday 4 September.**

The strike is part of a global McDonald's strike, and is the first time McDonald's workers in the UK have struck. Workers in Cambridge and Crayford were balloted and voted by 95% in favour of strikes. Almost as soon as the ballot result was announced McDonald's offered 80,000 of its UK workers guaranteed hours, thereby agreeing to one of their demands even before the strike.

Steve Day, a worker at a McDonald's store in Cambridge, spoke to *Solidarity* about their struggle.

**Why are McDonald's workers going on strike?**

We're striking for £10 an hour, union recognition and end of zero-hour contracts. In the recent past, a

third of workers have had their hours dropped without warning. One 17 year-old worker had to leave his parents' house and is only on £4 an hour — he works five days a week but can't afford a place to live and is living in a broken car, despite his health problems. We are striking to demand better.

**What's the plan for the day?**

We will have picket lines at 6-7am in Cambridge and 7-8am in Crayford. We'll then move to a rally in Parliament Square at 10am. Jeremy Corbyn, John McDonnell, Frances O'Grady from the TUC, and people like Lily Allen and Russell Brand will be there showing their solidarity with the strike.

**How have you been organising?**

The most important thing has been building the union member-

ship. Our strategy has been to find out what their issues are and how they are affecting them, and get them to imagine what it would be like if it wasn't the case. We link the problems they face to their pay and conditions. We tell them of the victories workers have had around the world, like a doubled minimum wage in New Zealand and \$64 billion in rises for three million workers in the US. Second, we make sure workers know what a union is — they often don't, especially young workers who haven't experienced struggle before. We tell them a union is people like them organising together and using their strength in numbers to win things they couldn't do on their own. It isn't a service provider, an insurance policy, a way of getting discounts — it's workers coming together and changing things for

ourselves — we impress this on workers. We hold branch meetings twice weekly where we democratically discuss how to win what we need.

**What do you think the potentials are for spreading the strike to other McDonald's sites?**

There are now six sites organising as a result of what we've done and moving towards balloting for strike action. This has been completely organic — they've started this themselves before we've heard about it. What's happening here is encouraging others to get active in their workplaces and fight the same problems that we face. It shows the potential to organise in a big way.

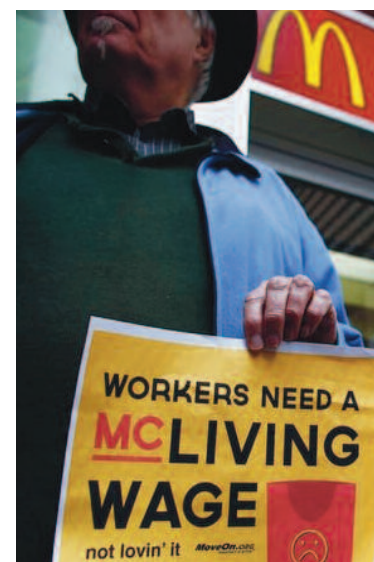
**What about other fast food outlets?**

Absolutely. We've been talking to workers from all different chains and they face the same problems, so the solution will be exactly the same as ours — organising in a union. We want to keep building the momentum.

**Corbyn has publicly said he supports the strike, and a £10/hour minimum wage and banning zero hour contracts was in the 2017 Labour manifesto — what do you think the potential is for support from the Labour Party for the dispute?**

McDonnell said we have the full support of the Labour Party. Both him and Corbyn will be there on the strike day. They've been talking about building community campaigns. In my old Labour Party, Momentum and the Labour Party were the most supportive people I've met. We want Labour to seriously take up the strike.

**What can local Labour parties, Young Labour and Momentum**



**groups do to support the strike?**

Join us on a picket line! We're also asking local Labour parties and Momentum groups to hold demos outside their local McDonalds on 4 September.


Social media is also useful for spreading the message. The reach of Momentum could be very important. Our hashtags are #mc-strike and #fastfoodglobal — solidarity messages are great to boost the strike and morale. Every solidarity message is encouraging — we never expected the incredible support we're getting.

Our success is down to how we're organising, our mind set. Which is to be serious, organised and disciplined. We're not fucking about, we fight collectively, and we're disciplined, by which I mean we're not off doing our own thing — we are active as a collective and march together as one.

**We keep people in the loop so one or two people aren't taking control. We want everyone to share experiences of all aspects of organising and striking.**

## Spot the difference ...

**Buckingham Palace**  
refurbishment = £370m



**Government money for**  
**Grenfell families = £5m**



**Big Ben**  
refurbishment = £60m



@workersliberty

## “Saving lives is a luxury we cannot afford”

**By Hugh Edwards**

**In the last issue we carried a piece on ever-growing xenophobia and racism across Italy, highlighting the launch of a ship by a gang of neo-fascists dedicated to “Defend Europe” by physically confronting the humanitarian NGO ships involved in rescuing refugees off the coast of Libya.**

On both sides of that ship were emblazoned the words — “No way, you will not make Europe home, no way”. The news of this putrescent exercise was greeted, typically, superficially, and dismissively by the bulk of Italy's bourgeois media. All the more so as the farcical itinerary of the craft saw it driven from one port to another, first in Italy then in North Africa, by protests and action by fishermen and port workers.

But there was more behind the media attitudes, especially from the liberal pro-government profile of opinion shapers. The quotation in the headline — it is from a senior government spokesperson — says why. These are the words of the Minister of Interior, Marco Minniti, a former hardline Stalinist of the now defunct Communist Party of Italy. He openly and arrogantly shares in substance what is written on the neo-fascist ship.

There is much more behind his pious platitudes that “the best way of helping the refugees is in their own homes”. Since he took office in December 2016, Minniti has ratcheted up the repressive profile of a state that, with regard to migrants, has been repeatedly condemned for its violations human rights.

First he abolished asylum seek-

ers' right of appeal against initial rejection. Then he opened the notoriously vicious prisons otherwise dubbed “Centres for Detention and Expulsion”, sadistically saluting their “success” in deporting more and more victims.

On 2 August the parliament ratified the government's decision, earlier reached with Libya's so-called prime minister, El-Farraj, to send troops and ships to Tripoli, while simultaneously imposing a repressive “code of conduct” upon NGOs in the Mediterranean, restricting, under the hostile gaze of armed guards aboard, their space of operation in regard to rescue. The objective was clear: to clear the presence, and witness of the NGOs from Libya's territorial waters, itself amplified arbitrarily in the Italian Libyan “accord”, permitting a free hand to the ruthlessly violent

Libyan coastguard and so, too, to the Italian naval presence, to block and drive back the criminally overcrowded crafts of the traffickers.

In all of this cynically mounted theatre of bourgeois real politik the fate of the refugees counts for less than nothing.

This then is the context that explains the sick, poisonous rash of lying media “exposures” in an attempt to criminalise the actions of the NGOs, accused, laughably, of being guilty of “collaboration” with the traffickers due to their “extremist ideology of humanitarianism”, which offered a “non-stop taxi service to” economic migrants “incited by stories of the land of plenty in Italy and beyond”.

Guff, of course, but deliberately spewed out to a population now in the grip of a virulent xenophobia, and where Minniti could round off

his success, appropriately, by declaring contemptuously “the far West is finished”. Now the toast of his PD centrist-left party and coalition government, the opinion polls underline, at least for the moment, his success in restoring their fortunes ahead of prospective national elections. Playing the racist card is always one way of besting the populist chauvinism and racism of Berlusconi, Salvini, and Grillo. As history has taught us, the price will be paid by Italy's working class.

**Nothing could illustrate more eloquently the utter capitulation and impotence of the Italian reformist and so called radical left. As the Neapolitan writer, Roberto Saviano stated, “a left that won't defend the weakest has lost itself — its silence is its requiem”.**



# Trans rights are not opposed to women's rights

By Claudia Raven

**There has been a great deal of debate within the left over the proposed consultation on, and potential changes to the Gender Recognition Act.**

This was sparked by an article by National Union of Teachers (NUT) Vice President Kiri Tunks in the *Morning Star*, claiming the changes will undermine the rights of cisgender women. She argues this against her union's supportive position, which has been reinforced by a statement coordinated by the NUT LGBT group.

The changes aim to remove the dehumanising quasi-medical gender recognition process currently in place and replace it with a self-identity process such as that in place in Ireland. In two years, the new system in Ireland has issued 240 certificates and there have been no reported abuses. The trans community overwhelmingly welcomes the UK proposals as a step towards autonomy.

The opposition to the proposals is mainly based in radical feminism, and the narrow view that women's oppression is entirely caused by biological differences. Radical Feminists argue that the result of self-identity gender recognition process will be the nullification of the legal protections women have fought for, the end of women-only spaces and the removal of specialist services.

I have seen it argued that the "trans agenda" is a movement backed by the establishment to take effective tools and language from feminists. It is notable here that the Irish law has not diminished the Abortion Rights Campaign. Biological essentialism assumes that "males" as a sex category/class are inherently more violent, and that trans women

are male. Trans men are often excluded from this analysis, or used solely as proof that women are so oppressed that they would change gender to escape.

Workers' Liberty understands that women's oppression is more complex than biology, and we have historically argued for trans women to be included in women's self-organisation, for example in NUS. We also understand the limited nature of the changes being discussed.

Many women's-only services or spaces do not demand birth certificates before access and therefore can already be accessed by trans women. In those places where gendered birth certificates matter – prisons, shelters, interactions with employers or the state – trans women are at a disproportionate risk of violence and discrimination so also need access to safe spaces. Cisgender women will experience no change.

## OBJECTION

**Increasingly, we also see a "materialist", "dialectical materialist" or "marxist" objection, which borrows heavily from radical feminist discourse. This is promoted by the *Morning Star*.**

Here, it is argued that biological sex is the basis for women's oppression, that gender is a value system designed to maintain the sexual hierarchy, and that trans people, in their rejection of their gendered socialisation, have deluded themselves into thinking they are a sex they are not, despite material reality. This view denies the autonomy of trans people to decide what they want for their own bodies, on the grounds that this is re-inscribing the perpetuation of gender. I believe that this is cruelty.



Let us "state what is". There are people in our society who's sexed characteristics or culturally-influenced gender identification and social setting causes them a great deal of distress. For some, these feelings start at a very early age. This body dysmorphia and gender dysphoria, alongside the discrimination they face, results in phenomenally high self-harm and suicide rates. International research suggests that between 77-83% of trans people have considered taking their own lives, and between 32-54% have attempted suicide. American research has shown that trans and non-binary people who experience rejection by family and friends, discrimination, victimisation or violence had even higher prevalence of suicide attempts. Whilst working for

the abolition of gender and women's oppression, why must we increase the number of trans peoples' deaths?

As socialist feminists, we aim for a society in which no person is restricted by gender roles. We support the bodily autonomy of all people. We want a world of human fulfilment. In a situation where minimal legal change can dramatically reduce the suffering of a section of people at no cost to others, we should support it. Women's rights and trans rights are not in conflict with each other.

**This discussion has been used to raise many broader questions about feminism, LGBTQ struggles, women's organising and trans rights. We welcome letters about this.**

# Newcastle abuse and lessons from Rotherham

By Charlotte Zalens

**On Friday 11 August the *Sun* newspaper published an article by Labour MP Sarah Champion under the heading "British Pakistani men ARE raping and exploiting white girls ... and it's time we faced up to it".**

The article is incredibly confused and naive (at one point Champion suggest that despite being the director of a children's hospice until becoming an MP in 2012, she only heard the abbreviation CSE for Child Sexual Exploitation a few months after becoming an MP).

Champion talks of British Pakistani men, but also references recent events in Newcastle where most of the men convicted were not Pakistani. She seems to conflate race, ethnicity, and religion throughout.

Champion's claim that "Britain has a problem with British Pakistani men raping and exploiting white girls" is crude, inaccurate, and wrong. Champion has tried to distance herself from the article, saying that it was edited to take the nuance out of her comments.

But her choice to publish such an article with the *Sun*, well known for dog-whistle racism often targeted at Muslims, where her article appeared alongside an editorial which called for MPs to tackle "the Muslim Problem", condemns her.

Champion is the MP for Rotherham where large scale child sexual exploitation, involving an estimated 1,400 children between 1997 and 2014, was exposed in 2014. That case, un-

like Newcastle, did involve British-Pakistani men. In other respects the Rotherham case bears many similarities to that of Newcastle.

There were multiple factors involved there: vulnerable young women, poverty, the use of drugs and alcohol, authorities disbelieving or in some cases blaming victims as well as, the patriarchal attitudes of some men, attitudes which are prevalent in many communities, in different forms, and which make women and girls "fair game" for sexual exploitation.

At the time of the Jay Report into CSE in Rotherham we wrote:

"What happened in Rotherham is happening in other areas of the country; although there will be particular local circumstances, there will be a wide range of abusers and victims.

"The Jay Report cites the hesitancy of social workers and practitioners over reporting the ethnicity of abusers as Pakistani, for fear of being accused of racism. This is a problem. It points to a dishonest way of dealing with racism.

"For many years Labour-led Rotherham council has relied upon tokenistic 'multicultural events' and communicating almost exclusively with self-appointed 'community leaders', often religious ones rather than engaging and building strong links with communities.

"This does not deal with racism in an open way; wrongly presumes the opinions of Muslim communities can and should be communicated by 'community leaders', and

disenfranchises others."

Unfortunately Corbyn's response to these events was to flatten out all these complex issues and pose the problem as one of child sexual abuse alone. Our responses must talk about the multiple factors involved in abuse. Anything else makes it possible for "community leaders" and others in positions of power to say "nothing to do with us".

That situation makes it very difficult for women's groups and others in Muslim communities who are pushing hard for more discussion about attitudes to sex, sexuality and respect for women. As we said in relation to Rotherham, it also endangers Muslim girls.

"... the council and social services ignored the possibility that abuse may be happening within the Pakistani community. An image was established of Pakistani men abusing



**Call out all abuse? Yes. But not like Sarah Champion**

white girls. In fact such abuse usually happens to those closest to the abuser. The under-reporting of abuse from minority ethnic victims is a problem."

**It appears some lessons have been learnt from the Jay Report; police did at least actively pursue gangs in Newcastle, but other lessons have not, and many vulnerable young women continue to suffer abuse.**

• **Unheard Voices: Sexual Exploitation of Asian Girls and Young Women**  
[bit.ly/2ioDd3s](http://bit.ly/2ioDd3s)





# Defend freedom of movement

**With the Tories in disarray on how to conduct Brexit negotiations with their increasingly frustrated European Union counterparts, the labour movement debate about how to approach Brexit is also hotting up.**

A welcome recent development is the launch of the Labour Campaign for Free Movement (LCFM) on 4 August with the prominent support of Labour MPs Clive Lewis and David Lammy.

More than 2,000 people from across the labour movement have now signed the founding statement, which aims to reshape the immigration debate in the Labour Party and wider working-class communities. At the moment, the upper hand in that debate is held by people from the *Morning Star* tradition of a "British road to socialism" and hostility to the EU.

These people oppose free movement saying it is just a tool of neoliberal bosses for driving down wages. Regrettably, they seem to have persuaded Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn to sing their tune.

Jeremy Corbyn has recently made several statements that suggest free movement for European workers is simply a conspiracy by British employers aimed at undercutting pay and conditions for British-born workers. That idea is mythical. There is scant evidence that migrant labour undercuts wages; in reality, EU migrant workers fill vacancies in the jobs market for low-skilled labour that longer-settled workers prefer not to do.

Recent labour shortages in the NHS, currently employing around 60,000 EU migrant workers, have highlighted the problem; without EU workers many sectors of UK life would be severely disrupted.

LCFM hits back at the idea that free movement and immigration undercut wages. The campaign's founding statement says: "A system of free movement is the best way to protect and advance the interests of all workers, by giving everyone the right to work legally, join a union and stand up to their boss without fear of deportation or destitution. Curtail-

ing those rights, or limiting migrants' access to public services and benefits, will make it easier for unscrupulous employers to hyper-exploit migrant labour, which in turn undermines the rights and conditions of all workers."

The debate is going on among the unions with different unions lining up on different sides of the argument.

At the LCFM launch, Manuel Cortes, General Secretary of the Transport Salaried Staffs' Association (TSSA), said: "We are fully committed to challenging and fighting unscrupulous bosses who exploit EU migrants. We put the blame firmly on the perpetrators not the victims. We strongly believe that free movement enriches our society. Our slogan is powerful but simple, end workers' exploitation, not free movement."

The Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union (BFAWU) took a position of supporting Brexit in the referendum, but is backing the LCFM: "Our union backed Brexit, but that doesn't mean scrapping freedom of movement. We can only improve the lives of

our members, like those planning strike action at McDonalds, through solidarity."

Among those on the other side of the debate stands Tim Roache, general secretary of the GMB, who argues for staying in the single market but marrying it with immigration control, claiming that migrant workers have been driving down the pay of some of his union members. He is wrong, and those who think so should be vociferous in taking him on.

A motion supporting freedom of movement has been submitted to Labour Party conference in September.

Right-wing politicians of UKIP and the Conservative right have made the perceived threat to British workers from EU migrant labour a hot political issue. In some areas of traditional Labour support — though perhaps remarkably few — this has lost Labour some political support.

**But it is Labour's job to make the counter-arguments, to unite British born and foreign born workers against the employers that set out to exploit them all.**

## Labour Campaign for Free Movement statement

**The Labour Campaign for Free Movement statement says: "The UK is at a crossroads in its relationship to the rest of the world, and so is our party.**

"Immigrants and free movement are being scapegoated by a political and economic elite that is subjecting ordinary people to cuts and austerity. During the greatest refugee crisis in recent years, the Tories have responded with brutality and detention centres.

"Labour should respond with clarity, humanity and solidarity. We fought the last General Election arguing against such scapegoating, and celebrating the contributions of migrants to our society. That tone must now translate into policy.

"Migrants are not to blame for falling wages, insecurity, bad housing and overstretched public services. These are the product of decades of underinvestment, deregulation, privatisation, and the harshest anti-union laws in Europe. On the contrary, migrant workers have been on the front line of fighting for better pay and working conditions. Labour is the party of all working people — regardless of where they were born.

**"A system of free movement is the best way to protect and advance the interests of all workers, by giving everyone the right to work legally, join a union and stand up to their boss without fear of deportation or destitution."**

• Sign the statement: [www.labourfreemovement.org](http://www.labourfreemovement.org)

## Help us raise £20,000 to improve our website

We need to build a left that is open to debate and is serious about self-education.

Our website, including its extensive archive could help build a different kind of socialist culture — one where discussion and self-education are cherished.

From Trotskyist newspapers of the 1940s and 50s, to older Marxist classics, to discussion articles on feminism, national questions, religion and philosophy and resources such as guidelines for Marxist reading groups — it's all there on the Workers' Liberty website.

But to make our archive of real use we need professional help to make all content fully integrated, searchable by date and subject and optimised for mobile reading. We need to finance a website co-ordinator to ensure our news coverage is up to the minute and shared on social media. We want to raise £20,000 by our conference in November 2017. Any amount will help.



Since our last issue of *Solidarity* we have raised £544 from our crowdfunder and £150 from other cash donations. Special thanks also goes to the comrades who raised £240 with a "Pedalling the Revolution" bike ride from London to Hebden Bridge, and to comrades in Australia who have raised £1,698.

- If you would like to donate by paypal go to [www.workersliberty.org/donate](http://www.workersliberty.org/donate)
- Or set up an internet bank transfer to "AWL", account 20047674 at Unity Trust Bank, Birmingham, 60-83-01 (please email [awl@workersliberty.org](mailto:awl@workersliberty.org) to notify us of the payment and what it's for); or
- Send a cheque payable to "AWL" to AWL, 20E Tower Workshops, Riley Rd, London SE1 3DG (with a note saying what it's for).

Take a look at [www.workersliberty.org](http://www.workersliberty.org)



# The unpredictable face of neoliberalism

Andrew Gamble spoke to Martin Thomas about the character of the Trump government. Andrew Gamble is a Professor in Politics at the University of Sheffield and the author of many books on political economy.

The interview was conducted at the end of July, before either the Charlottesville clash, the North Korea crisis or Steve Bannon resigned.

**MT:** Since the 1940s the world markets have been structured by a series of institutions: the WTO, the IMF, the G20, the G7, NATO. The USA has been central to all of these. Is Trump going to blow them up?

**AG:** He hasn't been tested by a major international crisis yet, but almost certainly there'll be one during his presidency. How he will react is unclear: how much he will be guided by people like Mattis and McMaster and how much he'll do something unpredictable. There is a risk it could be the latter. While he hasn't done much that's very radical yet, he has certainly disoriented the complex web of international alliances that the

US has put so much store by over the last 70 years. He has upset Australia and Germany: very long-standing allies. He has given comfort to Russia and some other states which are normally not close to the US at all. This has been very unsettling for lots of other states. The likelihood is that that's going to continue because of the erratic and chaotic way the Trump administration works.

**MT:** The *Economist* (26/1/17) commented that Trump was bringing to political dealing his approach from business bombast and brokering: "he aims high, pushes and pushes, but then settles for less than he originally sought". But, as the *Economist* comments, "dealing with countries is a higher-stakes game than bargaining over Manhattan building plots".

**AG:** I think it is partly that. He clearly had so little actual political experience. His business background was fairly low-level — real estate — he wasn't CEO of a major international company. Tillerson is a different category of a businessperson from Trump. Trump's experience was as a reality TV host. He approaches relations with other leaders with an eye on how it's going to play with

his base and how he can make himself look good. He uses bluff and does outrageous things partly in the belief that this will enhance his ability to do deals. This is in itself a very unsettling way of conducting relations.

In the first six months he sent out more than a thousand tweets. These things are superficial in one way, but they betoken a style which is deeply unsettling: the fact that he is prepared to put things into public tweets which normally, in previous presidencies, would have been private communications. I had wondered whether his behaviour might start to change as he learnt more about what the US Presidency was like. But it seems not at the moment. Every time his behaviour has become a bit more normal it has been followed by reverting to some of his old techniques and habits. I conclude that he probably isn't going to learn very much and what we've seen in the first six months is likely to carry on.

All US Presidents have had courts. But Trump's court is particularly fluid and has some very opposed factions within it, which, in policy terms, point in quite different directions. Trump seems to pivot from one of

these factions to another, so that no faction is dominant for very long, and he plays the factions off against one another. That makes the policy even more erratic and hard to read for foreign observers.

We should expect some major shocks, particularly if crises of one kind or another test Trump.

**MT:** The Russia connection? What's in it for Trump? And what's in it for Russia?

**AG:** It is mysterious how difficult it is for Trump to shake the Russia connection off. That has led me to believe that there is something going on which we don't understand yet. The likely thing, although there isn't firm evidence for this yet, is that Trump's business empire is reliant in some way on Russian money — not government money, but oligarch money. There were stories at one time, of links through Deutsche Bank, which is one of the main funders of the Trump business empire.

The multiple links of people associated with Trump with Russia are extraordinary. There is probably something of substance behind it all. He has also got people, particularly Mattis and McMaster, who represent the American political security establishment and a traditional US policy towards Russia, and that of course chimes with what a lot of Republicans want.

So Trump has been forced to concede on the sanctions. But it doesn't stop him! The latest revelation, that at the G20 meeting [7-8 July in Hamburg] he had a second 60-minute chat with Putin in which Putin used a Russian translator and Trump wasn't accompanied by a translator. That in itself was a breach of state department protocol. Why would you do that, when there is so much focus on his links with Russia and his associates?

The Russians clearly were involved in meddling in the US election. I suspect they didn't expect Trump to win, and they were probably more seeking to weaken Hillary Clinton when she became President, by creating something which Congress might want to investigate. Trump, having actually won the election against Russian expectations, poses a problem for them.

Unless they actually have got a hold over him in a form they could immediately cash in, which seems unlikely, I suspect having Trump in the White House is in some respects unwelcome to them — because he is so uncertain and difficult to read. They cannot be sure which of the factions of the White House will be on the up at any one time, and that makes it difficult for them to plan their policy.

Until these meetings with Trump, they have been very wary, and holding back, not rushing in. At the same time they tried to keep lines of communication open. Tillerson's role in all of this is fascinating. He knows Putin and the top Russians very well because of his dealings when he was Exxon CEO. He obviously got on very well with them. What precisely is going on there?

It is interesting that much more effort so far from the Trump administration has gone into relations with Russia than into, say, relations with China, which many see as a much greater priority for any US administration, especially at the present time.

I think there must be something which explains this depth of association with Russia, but exactly what it is I am not sure. The special counsel may be able to dig it out, but the special counsel may not last very long. It looks like Trump is seeking a pretext to dis-

"Some very fine people" - "some anti-police protestors" - "some beautiful statues"



SHOULD HAVE GONE TO SPEKSAVERS!

## Trump and Charlottesville

By Dan Katz

After hundreds of far right activists marched on the University of Virginia campus in Charlottesville on 12 August US President, Donald Trump, condemned both sides.

In other words he placed Nazi sympathisers who chanted antisemitic slogans on the same moral level as the anti-racist black and white youth who rallied against them.

The anti-fascists faced extreme violence from the far-right, including one murder, of Heather Heyer, mowed down by a racist who rammed a car into a group of protesters.

Trump's remarks were met with outrage, and even some Republican politicians openly protested. Heather Hayer's mother refused to talk to Trump and sixteen members of Trump's Committee on Arts and the Humanities resigned.

A new *Washington Post* poll suggests that only 28% of Americans approve of Trump's handling of the Charlottesville crisis. 56% disapprove. That's good because the fact that the far-right is on the march in the US, and clearly feels enabled by Trump, is extremely alarming.

The far-right marchers were protesting at plans to remove a statue of the Confederate general Robert E Lee. Trump sided with

those who oppose removing the statue, praising the "beautiful statues and monuments" of the South's civil war leaders.

On Saturday 19 August a right-wing rally in Boston was surrounded by anti-racists. Trump denounced the protesters as "anti-police agitators".

One anti-racist, commented to a *Guardian*, "Well, [Trump] is not wrong. Our generation has been radicalized by police murdering people of colour. Cops shut down a massive section of Boston and protected about 25 right-wingers while 45,000 people joined counter-protests.

"I think for a lot of people it's clear what side the police are on." Indeed.



miss the special counsel the way that Nixon dismissed Archibald Cox.

**MT:** Will Trump be forced out of office before the end of his term?

**AG:** I can't see it happening immediately. I suspect the midterms [elections for Congress in November 2018] are critical. If the Republicans have significant losses, or if it comes to look like they are heading for such losses, some Republican support might desert him. Up to now, Republicans in Congress have been very supportive of him. He got all his nominees for the cabinet. Some went through on knife-edge votes but the Republican majority held.

There is some evidence that his base is, while not hugely loyal, is more loyal than the Congress. It doesn't seem that he is in immediate trouble.

Even right at the end, Nixon still had 20% support. You might ask, who were these people who supported Nixon against all the weight of evidence? Republicans in Congress were very reluctant to desert Nixon until the evidence became overwhelming, and then they started to flake away. It was the tapes that did for Nixon in the end. If it hadn't been for the tapes, I don't think the Republicans in Congress would have deserted him. There wouldn't have been a majority for impeachment.

One of the things that's holding up Trump's presidency is that he has a group of former military people — Mattis, McMaster, Kelly — who are allied with Tillerson. That group is critical for the credibility of Trump's presidency. If that group were to conclude that he was a liability, that could really put the skids under the presidency. As long as he has the support of that group, he can probably survive.

If the Republicans were to lose control of the House and of the Senate in the midterms, then the likelihood of an impeachment being launched by the Democrats would be quite high. Even then, it would be difficult to achieve.

Clinton had poor approval ratings at the start, and then was helped by a long economic boom. What Trump needs above all is a pick-up in the American economy. He is thinking of replacing Janet Yellen as chair of the Federal Reserve. Three of the people who have been tipped as being most likely to succeed her have signed an article saying that Trump's goal of getting 3% growth in the US economy is achievable, while Yellen has been casting doubt on that.

Trump needs a way of unleashing a boom in the US economy. That would boost his ratings and stave off some of his enemies. It would make a lot of the Republicans happy and improve their chances of holding onto Congress in the midterms. But if he can't improve the economy he is in trouble. He faces big obstacles, and his stance on trade deals doesn't help.

Trump continues to be blocked on his signature legislation. The wall in Mexico is going nowhere: it's going to be difficult to get the money to build it voted through Congress. The travel ban has been approved partially by the Supreme Court but that could be reversed again when a full hearing takes place in November. The repeal of Obamacare is in serious trouble and the Republican Party is split in Congress. The infrastructure programme hasn't got off the ground, and neither has the tax reform...

Those are things that he needs. Some of them, perhaps, he can put in place in the next six months. But the longer this goes on, if he doesn't have significant achievements, and he can't engineer a boom in the economy, it makes a really bad backdrop for the midterms.

There are a lot of negatives. They could build up to a situation where his position gets



very weak, especially if he goes in for more erratic behaviour in international relations or tries to fire Robert Mueller. Then Kelly, Tillerson, Mattis and McMaster might call time on him.

US Presidents can be blocked in a lot of the things they want to do, but actually ousting them is difficult and rare. There is a lot of institutional inertia which keeps them in office. I suspect that Trump is quite safe for the moment, but things could change next year.

## OPPOSITION

**MT:** There is widespread discontent with Trump, but no-one leading opposition to him, especially now that his main Republican critic, Senator John McCain, is suffering from brain cancer.

**AG:** I can't see who in the Republican Party is really going to emerge to rally opposition to Trump, although I suppose it's possible. Most of the Republican leaders are people whom Trump beat in the fight for the nomination. The Democrats seem to be very divided and to be providing no clear lead.

That's partly for structural reasons, because in America there is no Leader of the Opposition. Also, the Republicans control both houses of Congress. If the Democrats were to win back control of either the Senate or the House, their majority leader would become a kind of de facto leader of the opposition. But as of now they have no leader with that status in either branch of Congress.

Someone like Bernie Sanders has no formal status and no institutional base on which to organise opposition. That is one of the factors which strengthens the US President. During their term, it is very easy for them to ride out spells of quite intense unpopularity, because there is no way they can be ousted, unless they are deserted by a majority in Congress.

**MT:** To what extent does Trump represent a (reactionary) break from neoliberalism?

**AG:** There are novel aspects to Trump, to his style of politics, certainly to the way he conducts himself as a politician. Some of the ideological roots go back a long way in American history: nativism, America First, isolationism, dislike of foreigners and foreign entanglements. All that side of Trump has deep roots in American history, and was very strong in the 1920s and 1930s.

There have been very few representatives of it in recent times — Pat Buchanan [right-wing Republican who sought the Republican nomination for president in 1992 and 1996, and ran on the Reform Party ticket in 2000] was one of very few. The consensus around US internationalism, globalism, economic lib-

eralism, neoliberalism, has been overwhelming, crossing both political parties and becoming embedded in the organising assumptions of the "deep state" of the imperial presidency of the last 70 years

Trump is a very discordant element in all of this — suddenly enunciating all these more traditional ideas, but in a modern context, and saying things like: "get out of the Paris agreements, cancel TTIP and TTP, cancel NAFTA, get out of NATO".

Even more extraordinary in a way was the rhetoric during the campaign, that he wanted to repatriate jobs to the US and break up the production chains of the US multinationals — that he would demand that US multinationals close their factories in China and bring the jobs to the US. It's bizarre that he would flirt with the idea of disrupting the whole structure of US political and economic power built up over such a long period, although since he was elected he has talked much less about it.

One of the factions around him comprises Steve Bannon, Steve Miller and other members of the alt-right. Bannon is a radical of a kind that has generally been kept away from the US Presidency in recent decades. He seeks a total disruption of the US state at home and the pattern of the US's involvement across the world. He has no qualms about wanting to bring about chaos and destruction and upheaval. He has a very Manichean view of the world, the forces of good and evil, and conflict, and the probability of major wars in the near future. Trump sometimes acts as a mouthpiece for Bannon. Bannon has written some of Trump's speeches including his inauguration speech.

There are other factions. There's the faction I have already talked about, the military people, Mattis and McMaster and Kelly, linked with Tillerson. They are representatives of the US deep state. Their outlook is entirely at one with the consensus of the last six or seven decades.

Then there is the New York group, the Goldman Sachs group. These are liberal financiers, with views the complete reverse of Bannon's working-class, protectionist, nativist outlook — people like Gary Cohn [now chief economic adviser] and Steve Mnuchin, the Treasury Secretary. These are people who are high-fliers on Wall Street. They view the global system and America's role within it from the standpoint of American finance.

It's a very contradictory administration. Trump's own views are very difficult to pin down. They seem to keep changing depending on his mood and what interests him at a given moment. My hunch is that Bannon will have much less success than he'd like in re-

shaping the American deep state, and that there are reserves of strength there which will form a barrier to Trump's radicalism.

Trump is probably having his biggest impact is in the deregulation of so much of the domestic economy, where he can use executive powers, and doesn't need legislation to reverse many of the executive orders that Obama brought in. He put Scott Pruitt in charge of the Environmental Protection Agency, though Pruitt is a longstanding opponent of the very existence of the agency, and made Rick Perry Secretary of State for Energy, though Perry has called for the abolition of the Department of Energy.

Trump's Twitter storms and all the rest of it are a distraction from what's already happening in this administration, which is the deregulation agenda. There are other parts of the deep state which are much harder to dislodge. In some sense Trump is reinforcing the power of the military, wanting to increase military budgets, new procurement and so on. The freedom which he appears to give to military appointments to shape policy indicates that in those areas, the Bannon agenda is much harder to push through.

**MT:** Is Trump part of an international wave of right-wing nationalism, potentially disrupting established neoliberalism?

**AG:** Bannon has talked about wanting a global Tea Party, linking up with Le Pen in France, Geert Wilders in Holland, Farage in the UK, and the Polish and Hungarian governments. Le Pen and Wilders were both beaten in the recent elections, and the German populist party AfD looks like it is falling apart and going backwards. A lot of people expected that the breakthrough for nationalist-populist parties would come in Europe, but it hasn't. It has happened in the US, with Trump. Europe, so far, has proved quite resilient, although things are still very much in play.

I don't see much opportunity for collaboration between these different groups. There seem to be too many differences. Each of them has its particular nationalist agenda. In the inter-war years the fascist parties found it difficult to collaborate with each other because of similar differences. It is well-known that Le Pen wanted to endorse Farage, but he didn't want to endorse Le Pen.

Trump did lean towards Le Pen and say some good things about her, but now he has been caught up in the Macron circus. I think it is going to be difficult for him, because it is so much a personal base that he has in the States; and his support within the Republican Party is a conditional support. They are prepared to work with him because he might be able to help deliver some of their agenda which they couldn't deliver in the Obama years. But there are still big ideological differences between the conservative movement and Trump, certainly the Bannon ideology that Trump has flirted with.

There's nothing more that Steve Bannon would like than a right-wing Catholic insurgency, a crusade against Islam and against China, but I think that is going to be very hard to deliver.

The crisis in Europe is far from over. You only have to roll the thing on a few years, and what happens if Macron fails to deliver on his promises in France? Or if the EU as a whole fails to deal with some of the big challenges of the Eurozone and migration which it faces? There could well be a new resurgence of nationalist-populist forces in Europe. For the moment it seems to be out of sync with what is happening in the US.

**The whole Trump episode in the US might be over by the time that there is a resurgence of the national-populists in Europe.**



# How to fight fascism: the Battle of Lewisham, 1977

By Dan Katz

40 years ago, on 13 August 1977, 500 members of the fascist National Front (NF) — protected by 5,000 police — attempted to march in Lewisham, south east London.

The NF was looking for publicity in an area where they had some considerable pockets of support.

The fascists were met by thousands of anti-fascist protesters — trade unionists, the far left, anarchists and large numbers of black youth — who fought running battles to stop them.

Chanting “The workers, united, will never be defeated!” the anti-fascists confronted the NF as they assembled off Clifton Rise, New Cross. Local people threw rubbish bins and furniture, and hundreds of bricks at the Nazis. 214 people were arrested and over 100 injured (half were police).

A second anti-Nazi demonstration, led by the Church, the Mayor and the Communist Party assembled two miles away in Ladywell Fields, Catford. When the police asked them to disperse, so that the Nazis could proceed undisturbed, the Mayor did as he was told.

Later that afternoon the police lost control



of Lewisham centre and — for the first time outside Northern Ireland — used riot shields as they attacked the anti-fascists.

The NF suffered a very serious defeat that day, 40 years ago. The comrades who chose to stand in the NF's path, and defend them-

selves and their community, were right.

**That's the lesson from the Battle of Lewisham.**

## The partition of India and the Indian bourgeoisie

**In August 1947 when Britain left India the country was partitioned, creating independent Dominions of India and Pakistan (now Pakistan and Bangladesh). In the process the provinces of Bengal and Punjab were also split. This article from 1947, by Ceylonese (Sri Lankan) Trotskyist Colin De Silva, discusses the stance on partition by the main bourgeois political groups in India — the Congress Party and the Muslim League. A terrible rupture and violence followed partition when 10-12 million people were displaced along religious lines.**

### ANOTHER DAY

**The present political situation in India is governed by two powerful factors. These are the partition of India and the working out of the new relationship between the Indian bourgeoisie and the British imperialists**

Linked with them are the questions of the states and the relationship of the new regime to the worker and peasant masses. The partition of India, so readily attributable to the Muslim League alone, was fundamentally due not to League politics but to Congress politics. The politics of Congress in relation to British imperialism was not the politics of struggle but the politics of settlement. And the politics of settlement inevitably fed the politics of partition in as much as it also left the initiative with British imperialism.

The partition of India was the outcome of the surrender-settlement of the Indian bourgeoisie with British imperialism over the heads of and against the insurgent masses. Pakistan is the product of the bourgeois abortion of the mass movement.

The tragedy of the partition flows particularly from the declared objects of its archi-

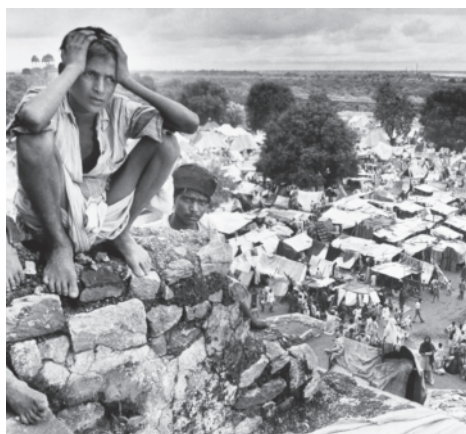
tect. This gruesome cutting up of the living body of India on the one hand and of two living “nationalities” (the Punjabi and the Bengali nationalities) on the other was put forward as a solution of the communal problem on the one side and as a means of opening the road to freedom on the other. Both pleas have proved false.

Partition has proved a means of reforging chains for the imperialist enslavement of the masses. In the other respect it has proved but a means of beguiling two states to thoughts of mutual war as the only means of canalising internal communal feeling away from civil convulsion. The war, by the way, may yet come, (if indeed, it has not already come in Kashmir and Junagadh). But the civil convulsions have come meanwhile in catastrophic fashion.

The partition of India has only rendered more acute a communalism which was entirely dissolvable without that operation. The attempt to erect communalism into separate states has only accentuated communalism in each state. The unicommunal state is the natural end-in-view of communalist partition's insane logic. It was not an accident that the Hindu Mahasabha [nationalist political group] began to gain ground after the partition. They were not self-deluded like Nehru or delusionists like Patel. They were entirely themselves — and Hindus against the Muslims and others.

Congress simply could not compete against them with its own more covert brand of communalism except by steadily giving way to their pressure. Partition killed Ghandi [his assassin was linked to the Mahasabha] as certainly as it killed Lakhs.

The Nehru-Patel Government must bear the responsibility for his death in the far more profound sense of a false policy than of insufficient precautions. Until they recognise and acknowledge this, their tears will continue to be as pointless as their policies continue to be fatal and dangerous. You cannot kill communalism by fine words or even hasty deeds.



The suppression of the Mahasabha and other frankly communal organisations will not kill communalism. But it will surely open the way to a reactionary attack on the left.

Governments which take special powers to act against the right always end up by using them more vigorously against the left.

The consequences to India of partition need hardly be pointed out to [our comrades in] Bengal. Your own province, like the Punjab at the other end of India, is one of those whose living body has been carved up in order to facilitate the Raj-Congress-League settlement over the heads of and against the masses.

[But] East Bengal is only an isolated outpost of Pakistan despite the fact of being Pakistan's most populous province. The mutuality of killing in the West of India is therefore being matched for the moment with a mutuality of forbearance in the East. The question is: how long will it last? The answer to this question depends on wider forces and developments than are contained in Bengal alone. The state of relations between the Indian Union and Pakistan will obviously govern the relations between West Bengal and East Bengal far more than the state of relations between West Bengalis and East Bengalis.

But the urge for Bengali unity is deep, historically old, and cannot in the long run be denied fruition. For it cannot be that a people who fought one partition at the beginning of this century will allow another to become permanent towards the middle of it out of mere communal passion. In the long run, therefore, the urge to “national unity” is bound to prevail over the present communal division.

The real task is to prevent the “national” movement from defeating the partition from feeding the chauvinist movement for re-absorbing Pakistan by conquest within the Indian Union (and vice versa). Those who on both sides of the dividing line are working for a genuine, i.e., voluntary, reunification have therefore to find a way of carrying forward that work without embroiling the Indian Union and Pakistan.

How is this to be done? Clearly not by aligning themselves with the reactionary expansionists on either side of the boundary. The task is the voluntary re-union of the Bengali “nationality” on the basis of its right to self-determination. It is only by grasping this point and working along this perspective that the lever of nationalism can be prevented from becoming an instrument of reaction and become an instrument of social progress.

In this regard it is necessary to grasp also a further fact. The reunion of the Bengali nationality on the basis of its right to self-determination is not possible except through the social revolution both in the Indian Union and Pakistan. In no other circumstances can the Bengali “nation” be free to exercise that right. But the social revolution in both the Indian Union and Pakistan can only mean a reunited India on a socialist basis.

**The perspective therefore is: A soviet Bengal in a soviet India! Thus does the proletarian revolutionary programme alone lead to the fulfilment on a progressive basis of the aspiration both for an united Bengal (and Punjab) and for an united India.**



# The left's ideology of "antizionism"

**Dale Street reviews Contemporary Left Antisemitism by Dave Hirsh (Routledge).**

**This is the third book on the theme of left antisemitism to have been published in less than twelve months.**

It follows Dave Rich's *The Left's Jewish Problem – Jeremy Corbyn, Israel and Anti-Semitism*<sup>1</sup> (published in September 2016) and *Antisemitism and the Left – On the Return of the Jewish Question*<sup>2</sup> by Bob Fine and Phil Spencer (published in February 2017).

Different aspects of left antisemitism and how it manifests itself today are covered in different chapters of Hirsh's book: The "Livingstone Formulation"; the Labour Party since Corbyn's election as party leader; the campaign for an academic boycott of Israel; conflicts over definitions of antisemitism; the nature of contemporary antizionism; and antizionism within the Jewish community.

(Hirsh's orthography is deliberate. He uses the terms "antizionism", not "anti-Zionism", to make a political point. What passes itself off today as a critique of Zionism has got nothing to do with real-world Zionism. As such, it is not anti-Zionism, nor even a form of anti-Zionism.)

Although discreet aspects of contemporary left antisemitism are covered in the different chapters of the book, a number of common themes run through all of them.

Hirsh locates today's left antisemitism within the broader context of the political degeneration and ossification of (broad layers of) the left.

That left exists in a binary political universe: good nations and bad nations; oppressor and oppressed nations; imperialism and "anti-imperialism"; white people and people of colour. The universality of class politics has been replaced by the politics of "campism".

Rational political argument has been replaced by a "politics of position". Anyone positioned in the wrong "camp" is to be denounced rather than reasoned with. This, argues Hirsh, represents a reversion to the political practices of early-twentieth-century totalitarian movements.

Such a world view is conducive to a particular interpretation of the Israel-Palestine conflict, which, in turn, is conducive to antisemitic ways of thinking and antisemitic consequences.

Israel is in the camp of bad, white, imperialist, oppressor nations. Palestinians constitute the antithesis of Israel. To be "of the left" is to be on the side of the Palestinians and against Israel — not just the policies pursued by its government but its very existence.

This demonisation of Israel — which itself constitutes an expression of left antisemitism — opens the door to traditional antisemitic tropes.

Jews are uniquely cruel — they murder children in particular and are committing genocide of the Palestinians. They are uniquely powerful — they control US foreign policy and the global media. And they are uniquely dishonest — they cry "antisemitism" to avoid being called to account for their crimes.

Indeed, they are so uniquely evil that they alone of all the peoples of the world cannot be allowed to exercise national self-determination. Of all the states in the world, the Jewish one alone is singled out for (the traditional antisemitic "strategy" of) boycott and ghettoisation.

Similarly, of all of the nationalisms in the



**The Livingstone formulation: "I'm not antisemitic, I'm a critic of Israel".**

world, the Jewish one — Zionism — is uniquely evil. It is racist, genocidal and akin to Nazism.

Hirsh uses the expression "flattening": The different currents within Zionism, the historical context of the emergence and development of Zionism, and the distinction which socialists otherwise make between state and people are all "flattened" in order to create an essentialist interpretation of Zionism and "the Zionist state".

But the result is not a critique of real-world Zionism. It is an ideology of antizionism which justifies its politics by reference to a "Zionism" of its creation.

Hirsh also makes the point that there is a world of difference between opposition to Zionism before and after the creation of Israel. The former was opposition to a political idea. The latter entails opposition to the existence of the state in which the Zionist project has been realised.

Arguments that such an approach to the Israel-Palestine conflict are antisemitic in substance and in consequence are brushed aside by their opponents through invocation of the "Livingstone Formulation", to which Hirsh devotes an entire chapter. (Named after Ken Livingstone. Not because he invented it — he did not — but because of the level of egregiousness and notoriety which his use of the Formulation has achieved.)

The "Livingstone Formulation" can be summed up as "I am not antisemitic and have not done or said anything antisemitic. You are accusing me of such things only because of my entirely legitimate criticisms of Israel."

This is not simply a modern manifestation of an antisemitic trope (that Jews raise accusations of antisemitism in bad faith). It also shuts down any space for rational argument — because it rules out *a priori* any need to assess the validity of this "bad-faith" claim of antisemitism.

Corbyn's election as Labour Party leader makes this left antizionist antisemitism a contemporary issue, not in some general sense but in a very immediate sense, for three particular reasons.

Corbyn himself belongs, at least in part, to that tradition, as is evidenced by his support for the "anti-imperialist" Stop the War Coalition, his involvement in the "Deir Yassin Remembered" campaign, his defence of Raed Salah and Steven Sizer, and his attitude to Hamas and Hizbollah.

A broad layer of Corbyn's rank-and-file supporters share to some degree the left antizionist approach to the Israel-Palestine conflict and its antisemitic consequences. Some of them do more than just share that approach. They energetically promote it.

And the Labour Party under Corbyn has to

date failed to politically confront the issue, as is exemplified in particular by the Chakrabarti Inquiry of 2016.

Chakrabarti's superficial conclusion was that manifestations of antisemitism in the Labour Party were just the classic case of a few bad apples, rather than something rooted in a widely shared set of political assumptions.

Hirsh describes his book as "among other things, a gathering together and a distillation of the work I have been doing over the last decade." The fact that some readers will already be familiar with the book's arguments from earlier articles by its author does not reduce its political value.

In fact, some of the most damning material in the book is not Hirsh's general political analysis of left antisemitism but the "micro-descriptions" of the abuse and harassment meted out to members of the UCU trade union who argued against an academic boycott of Israel.

## CHALLENGE

**But there are some issues in the book which are either open to challenge or would have merited further exploration and explanation.**

Hirsh rightly points to the prevalence of left antisemitism on the British left and in the broader labour movement.

But he goes a lot further: "It is not accidental that the issue of antisemitism has become pivotal to this process of defining who is inside ('the community of the good', to use Hirsh's expression) and who is not."

Hirsh seems to be saying that an acceptance of antizionism has become the decisive test for membership of the left. But this claim does not stand up to scrutiny. Just as antizionism essentialises Zionism, so too Hirsh seems to be essentialising the contemporary left.

Hirsh hints at a dystopic future for the Labour left and the Labour Party. The Corbyn phenomenon is "not currently a physically violent movement." Opponents of antizionism are "not yet, in the Corbyn Labour Party, (dealt with) by physical violence." Corbyn's election as Prime Minister "might" see an increase in "the denouncing of most Jews as pro-apartheid or as defenders of racism and neoliberalism."

If these sibylline musings are meant seriously, they should surely have been substantially expanded upon. As they stand, they merely provide an easy target for those who want to condemn the book without engaging with its core arguments.

These momentary visions of the use of totalitarian physical violence to crush political dissent and the unleashing of government-

sanctioned antisemitic campaigns also sit uneasily with Hirsh's lesser-evilist approach to the election of a Labour or a Tory government:

"In this context (of a choice between two variants of populism), of course, it is quite legitimate to prefer Labour populism to Tory populism."

In dealing with antizionism within the Jewish community Hirsh tends to focus on individuals who have been prominent in debates in academia. Antizionist Jews with a high profile in promoting left antisemitism in the labour movement are hardly mentioned (save in relation to the UCU).

Tony Greenstein, for example, escapes scrutiny entirely, even if he makes an anonymous appearance at page 113 of the book:

"Some of those activists who had already been making the same speeches about Israel for thirty years suddenly found themselves being given huge standing ovations at union conferences for speeches in favour of boycotting Israel."

And while it is understandable that a senior lecturer in sociology might want to sing the praises of sociology, the chapter which portrays sociology as a key to understanding antisemitism ("Sociological Method and Antisemitism") really makes little contribution to an understanding.

(In any case, it would have been more appropriately entitled: "I Used To Be a Trotskyist. But Then I Discovered Sociology.")

Like any other writer, Hirsh could use only the material available to him at the time of writing his book. Thus, the Ken Livingstone of his book is simply someone who thinks that Hitler supported Zionism (until he went mad). Jackie Walker did no more than use some unfortunate turns of phrase in a Facebook post and in an intervention at a Labour Party fringe meeting. And Bongani Masuku is a heroic South African trade unionist unjustly accused of antisemitism.

But by the time of the book's publication earlier this month, things had moved on. Livingstone was alleging "real collaboration" between Nazis and Zionists, with the big-hearted Nazis supposedly acceding to Zionist requests for help with training camps, weapons and banning sermons in Yiddish.

Walker was likening her treatment to that of a black lynching in the Jim Crow states, claiming that she had been targeted (by Zionists, of course) in "an attempt to destroy Jeremy Corbyn and an entire political movement."

And Bongani Masuku had been found guilty of antisemitic hate speech by the South African Equality Court, while the trade union federation of which he was an employee surreally denounced the verdict as an attack on "workers' rights to offer solidarity."

That's sums up the problem with writing a book about contemporary left antisemitism: By the time of its publication, the examples which it cites have become examples of yesterday's left antisemitism.

Hirsh's book is a valuable contribution to understanding the forms and nature of left antisemitism. It provides not just a better understanding of the phenomenon but also a political challenge to its influence.

**His book is the third book on the same theme in less than a year. It would be surprising if it was not followed by at least another three over the next twelve months.**

1. review at [workersliberty.org/node/27063](https://workersliberty.org/node/27063)

2. review at [workersliberty.org/node/27684](https://workersliberty.org/node/27684)



# Where we stand

**Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production.**

The capitalists' control over the economy and their relentless drive to increase their wealth causes poverty, unemployment, the blighting of lives by overwork, imperialism, the destruction of the environment and much else.

Against the accumulated wealth and power of the capitalists, the working class must unite to struggle against capitalist power in the workplace and in wider society.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty wants socialist revolution: collective ownership of industry and services, workers' control, and a democracy much fuller than the present system, with elected representatives recallable at any time and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

We fight for trade unions and the Labour Party to break with "social partnership" with the bosses and to militantly assert working-class interests.

**In workplaces, trade unions, and Labour organisations; among students; in local campaigns; on the left and in wider political alliances we stand for:**

- Independent working-class representation in politics.
- A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
- A workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.
- Taxation of the rich to fund decent public services, homes, education and jobs for all.
- A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression. Full equality for women, and social provision to free women from domestic labour. For reproductive justice: free abortion on demand; the right to choose when and whether to have children. Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Black and white workers' unity against racism.
- Open borders.
- Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.
- Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.
- Equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.
- Maximum left unity in action, and openness in debate.



**If you agree with us, please take some copies of *Solidarity* to sell — and join us!**

More online at [www.workersliberty.org](http://www.workersliberty.org) Workers' Liberty @workersliberty

# Politics is empowering

**Kelly Rogers is one of the four sacked union reps at the Ritzy cinema in Brixton. She is also a supporter of Workers' Liberty. She spoke to us about the Picturehouse workers' long-running dispute.**

**It's become quite fashionable to ask whether we need new forms of trade unionism, and new tactics to attract different kinds of workers.**

Obviously there are obstacles and risks particular groups of workers face, but the way we've organised people in Picturehouse isn't through any new-fangled strategy but basic organisational techniques that have been used for generations. We've gone into cinemas and talked to people in the foyer or across the bar, gone back, made our case, answered questions, organised meetings and just persuaded people to get involved. It's basic trade unionism.

We are debunking the widespread idea that precarious, low paid, young, migrant workers are impossible to organise. In my experience the reality is the opposite: workers like us are keen to address our evident exploitation, low pay, poor conditions when we're given the chance.

**Do you think workers' view of politics changed?**

Quite a few Picturehouse workers have been seriously discussing politics, many have been radicalised and politicised by the dispute.

The strike has been happening alongside the Labour leadership contests, Brexit, the rise of Trump, the general election. Being involved in a union and in a workplace struggle has magnified people's engagement with these wider political issues and events. I'm quite confident that out of this dispute we'll have not only some excellent union activists, but also political activists, some of whom will consider themselves revolutionary socialists.

**Are you pleased about the level of outside support?**

Yes, it's extremely heart-warming and inspiring to see people giving up huge amounts of time and energy to support us, standing outside cinemas, raising it in the labour movement, getting motions to their Labour branches, organising fundraisers...

An astonishing amount of work has been done by outside supporters of the dispute, a lot of which goes unacknowledged and we are incredibly grateful. Workers' Liberty comrades have been key to that, but also lots of people in the Labour Party, in Momentum groups and other left organisations who've provided invaluable support.

The support we've had has been fantastic, but there is still a lot the



**Kelly on the Ritzy cinema picket line for a Halloween protest**

wider labour movement could do to help. Part of the issue is that our union Bectu hasn't really beaten the drums at a national level. In so far as that's been done it's been done by the left. Could more have been done earlier with official, national-level support and promotion?

**What has the dispute suggested about the state of the unions?**

Early on, in particular, Bectu allowed us to run the dispute and organise it ourselves: we were given a lot of freedom to organise our own strikes, to plan our strike days, to make them colourful and carnivalesque.

But we've also seen the tendency unions have to be (small c) conservative. There's a tendency for officials to oppose militant strategies that could grow and win campaigns. I think they're worried about this getting too big, too noisy, too costly. I also think there's a distrust of social movement-type unionism, working with political activists, the Labour Party, campaigns, even other unions. There's a worry about things getting out of official control.

I think Bectu feels under a lot of pressure from anti-union legislation and reflects that back onto us. The new Trade Union Act has been quite pivotal in our dispute. When it came in we immediately felt pressure from our leadership, not just to comply with the legislation, but to go above and beyond it. The law is extremely restrictive, so if you want to fight effectively there has to be at least some element of not allowing yourself to be restricted more than absolutely necessary. The unions should be seeking to stretch these laws and ultimately overturn them, and educating and agitating among the membership to oppose them rather than taking them as something immutable.

Of course management will use anything they can to undermine our struggles, of course we need to be disciplined and careful, but I fear we are being whipped into irrational fear of the law, and of company disciplinaries, and everything else. Unions should be working to

make their members feel confident, not panicky and scared.

**What do you think revolutionary socialist politics brings to workers in a struggle like yours?**

Being in a revolutionary socialist organisation has been central to me thinking about how I should go about organising this dispute, what we should look for from the strike, what will allow us to win. More generally though it imbues people with a political perspective that allows you to understand the mechanics of what's happening around you.

Why are we being exploited by our employer? Why are we paid so little? It's so common for people to believe that low wages are just the way things are or even that it's justified because we're in a supposed "unskilled" job. Equipping people with a class analysis of society illuminates the dynamics of exploitation. That's empowering, and it helps us to understand what solutions are possible.

Having that perspective can allow us to break out of the limitations trade unionism is stuck in, where it's about you, your job, at best maybe you and your colleagues. That is important but that's where it stops, if it gets there at all. It's fairly obvious that the reality of workers' lives isn't just shaped by pay or breaks or pensions but is shaped by inequality in every aspect of society, whether it's your being able to pay your rent or worrying about your immigration status — both things that concern many of my colleagues!

**Understanding that our campaigns can be part of a wider political project, a class project, to make people's lives better and free us from exploitation, is empowering as well as suggesting particular strategies and solutions in the struggle.**

- A longer version of this article is available at: [bit.ly/2in30sB](http://bit.ly/2in30sB)
- To find out more about the dispute visit [picturehouseliving-wage.com](http://picturehouseliving-wage.com) and [picturehousefour.org](http://picturehousefour.org)

## Events

### Saturday 26 August

**Picturehouse day of action**  
Various locations across the country  
[bit.ly/2x9hxE](http://bit.ly/2x9hxE)

### Saturday 26 August

**Pro-choice anti-vigil**  
9am, Marie Stopes International  
87 Mattock Lane, London W5 5BJ  
[bit.ly/2x9fwIU](http://bit.ly/2x9fwIU)

### Saturday 26 August

**Socialism in the 21st Century — south London Workers' Liberty summer event**  
1pm, Besson Street Community Garden, Besson Street, London SE14 5AE  
[bit.ly/2x8R3dw](http://bit.ly/2x8R3dw)

### Monday 4 September

**McDonalds strike and rally**  
11am, Parliament Square, London

### 9-11 September

**NCAFC summer training**  
Sheffield Students' Union, Western Bank, Sheffield S10 2TG  
[bit.ly/2x8tgKT](http://bit.ly/2x8tgKT)

### Friday 15 September

**Turn it up to 11 — fundraising gig for the Picturehouse strike**  
Venue to be confirmed  
[bit.ly/2xoFwGj](http://bit.ly/2xoFwGj)

**Have an event you want listing?**

**Email:**

[solidarity@workersliberty.org](mailto:solidarity@workersliberty.org)



# Bin workers force council to back down

By Jim Denham

**Birmingham refuse workers have forced the Labour council to back down on plans to cut jobs and pay.**

The dispute has been suspended after seven weeks of discontinuous action, a day before Unite was to have balloted to extend the action to Christmas.

In talks at ACAS, the council agreed to withdraw the threat to leading hands' jobs and pay; in response Unite has agreed to discuss the possibility of a move from four-day to five-day working and other potential cost savings. Clearly, such changes can only be accepted following a full, democratic discussion and vote by the workers who will be affected.

Members of South Birmingham Momentum mobilised to support



the workers, visiting picket lines and pressuring councillors to demand the council leadership back down from its initial intransigence and enter into serious negotiations with Unite.

Unite's acting Regional Secretary for the Midlands, Howard Beckett,

said, "The council has addressed our member's concerns, including the safeguarding of the grade three post that is vital to safety at the rear of refuse vehicles.

**"Unite also welcomes the fact that our suspended rep is now returning to work."**

# BA workers continue strikes

By Simon Nelson

**Mixed Fleet British Airways workers have extended their strike until 30 August as Unite has confirmed their will continue with legal action against the airline.**

The dispute has so far seen over 60 days of action with BA attempting to sanction and victimise those on strike.

BA are intent on spending millions to lease aircraft from Qatar airlines, rather than raise the pay of the workers in dispute. Unite are taking legal action to address this alongside BA's removal of bonuses, incentives and travel concessions. If BA are stopped from the so-called "wet leasing" of other aircraft then the impact of the strike will be dra-

matically increased, but it would not be impossible for BA to make a new deal with another airline.

There are no prospects yet of other sections of the BA workforce or other crews joining the dispute.

Crew in the lower-paid mixed fleet, working out of Heathrow on long and short-haul flights, are already in the middle of a lengthy walk-out and will extend the strike to cover the period from Wednesday 16 August to Wednesday 30 August.

Oliver Richardson from Unite said: "We would urge British Airways to start treating our members fairly and drop the bullying tactics to avoid the escalating cost and disruption that continued industrial and legal action brings."

**BA has made a profit of £14bn yet still pays the mixed fleet staff**



**a basic wage of £12,000 with wages that can vary dramatically depending on the flights crew staff.**

# Thames riverboats workers ballot for strikes

By Daniel Randall

**Captains and mates working for City Cruises, a company which runs sightseeing trips along the River Thames, will ballot for strikes to demand reinstatement for Hairia Abdo, an unjustly sacked colleague.**

Hairia, a Customer Service Assistant (CSA) at City Cruises, was sacked for something commonly accepted as an established working practise, despite her long service at the company.

Workers at City Cruises are organised by the Rail, Maritime, and Transport workers' union (RMT), which has been conducting an organising campaign at the company for a number of years. RMT has recognition to collectively bargain

on behalf of captains and mates, the workers who pilot the boats, but not on behalf of the customer service staff, among whom the union has individual members but no collective recognition. Therefore, the decision by the captains and mates — a better-paid and in some sense more "skilled" section of the workforce — to ballot for industrial action in defence of a CSA displays an admirable spirit of industrial unionist solidarity.

City Cruises is a rich company, earning significant revenue from its position as one of only a small handful of operators licensed to run sightseeing cruises in London. Its net worth has increased sharply over the last three years, rising from £10 million in 2013 to £15 million in 2016. Despite this, the con-

ditions of work for their customer service staff mirror those experienced throughout the service sector, and are characterised by low pay and a lack of guaranteed hours.

RMT is the only union to have attempted to organise customer service workers on the River Thames. Some captains and mates on other companies, such as the Thames Clipper boats (sponsored by Bank of America subsidiary MBNA), are members of Nautilus, a sectional union organising officer staff in the maritime industry.

**The campaign to win reinstatement for Hairia can act as a spur to the RMT's wider campaign to organise amongst CSAs and win collective bargaining rights for customer service staff at City Cruises.**

# No pay-rise for 10 years!

By Brenda Allen

**Eighteen workers, members of the Community union, who work for ROM, a steel manufacturing company in Sheffield, struck for two weeks (ending on 7 August) because they have not received a wage rise for 10 years.**

Workers report no response from their employer, but they are ready for a prolonged dispute and expect to announce further strike dates. Their assessment is that ROM had built up supplies prior to their action but as the dispute continues their action will have a deeper effect on the firm.

ROM, a subsidiary of the international Celsa group, supply reinforced steel to the construction industry.

ROM have made pay offers to workers from other sites and are continuing to negotiate in an attempt to stop the strike spreading. Despite this, Sheffield workers report there are potential ballots elsewhere.

The action has been 100% solid amongst permanent shop floor workers. The company has had a policy of divide and conquer and has employed around 50% of agency workers for many years, on different terms and conditions.

The Community members have made attempts to unionise these workers, but up to now the threats of being finished have affected this and the agency workers have worked through the strike.

**Solidarity has begun within the Sheffield labour movement for what could be a long hard battle.**

# DOO strikes continue

**Strikes over Driver-only operation (DOO) on train companies across the country are continuing.**

Workers on Northern, Southern and Merseyrail will strike again on 1 and 4 September. Rail union RMT held a protest at Waterloo station on Monday 21 August to pressure new the South West Trains operator

to retain guards on the trains.

**Guards on Greater Anglia trains are also being balloted for strikes over plans by the company to introduce and/or extend DOO on some of their routes.**

• An interview with a Northern rail worker can be read here: [bit.ly/2x8oQnf](http://bit.ly/2x8oQnf)

# Central Line drivers plan strikes

By Ollie Moore

**Drivers on London Underground's Central Line are balloting for strikes to win reinstatement for Danny Davis, a driver of 20 years' service who was recently sacked following a platform incident.**

Danny missed a passenger boarding his train at Ruislip Gardens station, who was hit by closing doors — a routine error which any driver can make, and which is routinely dealt with as a performance and coaching issue.

After a shoddy disciplinary

process, in which CCTV footage from only two of Ruislip Gardens's 17 cameras was used, Danny was summarily dismissed, despite his unblemished record.

The RMT, Danny's union, has described the sacking as a "travesty", and "miscarriage of justice", which, if it is not reversed, could establish a precedent whereby other drivers are sacked for routine mistakes.

**The union is balloting its driver members at all Central Line train depots for strikes, with a ballot timetable yet to be announced.**

# More strikes for Bart's workers

By Gemma Short

**Serco-employed workers at Bart's Health NHS Trust will strike again on 18-22, 25-29 August, and 1-5, 8-12, and 15-19 September.**

Workers have so far stuck for 22 days, including a two week strike

from 25 July to 7 August, in their fight over low pay. Serco is still refusing to negotiate with the workers' union Unite.

**They are demanding a 30p per hour increase, and for lower workloads.**

• More coverage of the strike: [bit.ly/2vZMPF7](http://bit.ly/2vZMPF7)

# Cleaners' struggles round-up

**Outsourced workers at SOAS have won their campaign to be taken back in-house.**

The announcement came soon after strikes by workers at LSE resulted in the university returning them to in-house employment.

**The United Voices of the World**

union, who organised workers at the LSE, has also announced that cleaners employed to clean Ferrari and Maserati showrooms in south Kensington will be balloting to strike for the living wage.





# Solidarity

For a workers' government

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## Against Trump, against Kim — solidarity with North Korean workers!

By Michael Elms

**Tensions on the Korean peninsula are increasing, threatening millions of innocent people with the threat of nuclear war.**

The tensions spring from a combination of the ramping up of North Korea's nuclear weapons programme, and US President Donald Trump's "Wall Street" approach to international diplomacy.

Andrew Gamble sums up Trump's diplomatic style in an interview on pages 6-7 of this paper: "Trump's experience was as a reality TV host... He approaches relations with other leaders with an eye on how it's going to play with his base and how he can make himself look good. He uses bluff and does outrageous things partly in the belief that this will enhance his ability to do deals. This is in itself a very unsettling way of conducting relations."

Trump's outrageous bombast has fed the North Korean crisis. Whether out of arrogance, parochial concern for his own rantings, or blundering, a stream of absurd threats, provocative military exercises and contradictory statements from the White House has raised the spectre of nuclear war.

The North Korean leadership — the obscene court of a Stalinist hereditary monarch — knows that the best guarantee for its continued despotic rule is to acquire nuclear weapons. The luxurious lives of the bureaucratic class sur-



**Kim Jong Un inspects a North Korean smart phone factory. North Korean workers are paying the price for his nuclear ambitions.**

rounding the Kim dynasty relies upon being able to fend off any foreign attempts at regime change, as well as crushing dissent at home.

With the development of missiles capable of reaching the USA, and the (rumoured) miniaturisation of nuclear bomb (a necessary step in delivering the bomb by long-range missile), the regime entrenches its defences against foreign interference.

The nuclear programme is expensive. In order to acquire parts, the regime has had to take extraordinary measures to get for-

eign currency, including converting munitions plants in Chongjin to commercial fisheries to raise cash.

North Korean workers are being made to bear the brunt of their rulers' nuclear drive. The regime's major source of money is slave-trading: North Korean workers are commonly sent abroad to work in dreadful conditions for foreign capitalists.

The Norwegian sports journal *Josimar* investigated the conditions of North Koreans working on St Petersburg's Zenit stadium. A subcontractor reported being

approached by a North Korean agent: "He said he could provide 100 skilled North Korean workers who were prepared to work 'around the clock' until the end of the year. The price was six million roubles [£80,000]. Four million would be sent to the government of North Korea. The rest would be split among his company and the workers. The workers would be paid 600 roubles [£8] daily."

A Russian site worker described the life of workers on the job: "They are like robots. All they do is work, work, work. They work from seven in the morning until midnight. Every single day. They are never off. They are very good workers, but they look unhappy. They have no life."

Escaped workers describe how their pay is often seized by secret police minders or foreign middlemen; and how foreign work teams are under constant surveillance by secret police informers on the job.

Vladimir Putin's World Cup vanity project is not the only destination for trafficked North Korean workers. The Malaysian press recently reported the disappearance without trace of 176 North Korean workers from their barracks in Sarawak state. It is believed that at least 100,000 such workers have been exported around the world.

The horror and waste of the nuclear programme is not lost on North Koreans. At the start of August, a source for Radio Free Asia reported the jailing of seven North Korean railway shock-

workers in Yanggang Province who had been overheard criticising the missile launch:

"While they were playing their game, a report of the missile launch was being aired over and over again on television [...] This annoyed them, and they said, 'If I had the money to make missiles, I would rather buy more construction equipment.'"

The people of Korea, North and South, are unwilling chips in a poker game played between various ruling classes. None of the big imperialist players — America, China, Russia — are remotely interested in ending the enslavement of the North Korean people. They all want to reach a more convenient arrangement with their Stalinist rulers.

China sponsors the Kim dynasty's state, supplying it with oil and diplomatic cover. Neither the rulers of China nor of South Korea want to deal with the wave of refugees that would likely follow the collapse of the Kim regime. Seoul doesn't want to foot the bill for reunification. Beijing doesn't want a united Korea. America's dealings in the region are motivated by a desire to maintain strategic dominance over China.

**The only civilising force that can and should put a stop to the criminal nuclear gambles of these governments, and end the calvary of the North Korean people, by bringing down the Kim regime is the political pressure and solidarity led by the international workers' movement.**

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